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ABSTRACT

Some means of attaining an optimal strategy of teaching Chinese as a second language through pragmatic, communicative orientations in which culture plays an essential role are outlined, based on learning theories and evidence of the role of cultural differences in facilitating or obstructing second language learning. Studies of the significance of culture in shaping personality are reviewed, and it is concluded that culture learning has to do with the shaping of an agreeable, understanding personality needed for efficient learning of a foreign language. The need for affective behavior on the part of the foreign language teacher, and the need to reconcile cultural differences for learning Chinese as a second language, are emphasized and illustrated. It is proposed that teacher training, material adaptation and development, development of empathy for culture conflict in students, and efforts at student orientation and counseling all play a significant part in developing teacher awareness of methods and strategies for teaching students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A program at the Mandarin Training Center of Taiwan Normal University consisting of workshops and seminars by scholars from different disciplines and research projects focusing on these issues is discussed, and some anecdotal evidence of the success of this approach is given. (MSE)

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THE IMPACT OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
ON TEACHING CHINESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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The Impact of Cultural Differences on Teaching Chinese as a Second Language

1. From Cultural Shock to Cultural Conflict

When Mao-sheng Lin¹ first arrived at the East-West Center from Taipei for degree study, he was overwhelmed by the American style hospitality characterized in Hawaii as "aloha hug and kiss."² Mao-sheng was so embarrassed that he became thoroughly flushed and awkward. He was tongue-tied to such an extent that he did not know how to react to the new American friends greeting him at the Honolulu International Airport.

On the other side of the world, Lisa Jacobs became greatly disturbed when she discovered that she was frequently stared at while walking on the streets of Taipei. Lisa was a young American student learning Chinese as a second language in the Mandarin Training Center of National Taiwan Normal University. She was so uncomfortable when passers-by gazed at her that she felt she had been deprived of her personal freedom. Experiences such as these restricted her efficiency in learning Chinese. This type of smothering encounter in a culture different from her own continued to handicap Lisa's learning of Chinese until she learned, with the assistance of her teachers and counselor, the significance of learning both the language and the culture of the society.

As she became more aware of the multiple links between language and culture learning through daily contact with the Chinese in Taipei, Lisa began to become more culturally receptive, and her learning of Chinese -- linguistically and culturally -- accelerated drastically as a result. Likewise, Mao-sheng after a rough beginning was able to pursue advanced studies in Agronomy & Soils in the University of Hawaii with minimal

personal problems. Both students adjusted well to a brand new cultural setting, and this was crucial to their academic success.

It is by no means true that each student going abroad to pursue advanced degree work or language studies ultimately enjoys the same practical experiences that Mao-sheng and Lisa encountered, which was "all is well that ends well." During my six years as a degree student in the United States, I met with many frustrated foreign students who ended up going home without degrees. Likewise, in my capacity as the Director of the Mandarin Training Center, I have bumped into numerous foreign students who became totally disabled in learning Chinese due to cultural adjustment problems.³ In other words, cultural differences can have crucial impact on the learning abilities of foreign students. It is therefore significant to explore the issue of how cultural differences influence the teaching and learning of a foreign language. Because of the drastic increase in enthusiasm about learning Chinese as a second language,⁴ it is essential that we discuss in detail the role of culture and its impact on learning Chinese as a second language in general, and its impact on teaching Chinese in particular. All teachers involved in the teaching of Chinese as a second language should have an awareness that it is through the learning and appreciation of a new culture that students can accelerate their learning efficiency and facilitate efficient interpersonal communication in a society new to their experience (Li 1983).

This paper will focus on how to attain an optimal strategy of teaching Chinese as a second language through pragmatic, communicative orientations in which culture plays an essential role. Other theories in relation to the attitudinal aspects of the learning, motivation, teacher training and retraining, as well as material adaptation for language and culture learning have been included in the following. Regardless of the backgrounds of the students, it is the teacher that facilitates students

with an optimal language learning situation. For the learning and teaching of Chinese as a second language, a cultural setting provided by the teacher will further eliminate cross-cultural problems, and thus accelerate language learning efficiency. Most of my observations have been made possible through experiences drawn from working with foreign students learning Mandarin Chinese in Taipei. Their wide-range of cultural backgrounds have contributed substantially to this study.⁵ These students' experiences of cultural shock and conflicts inside and outside the Chinese language classes shed considerable light on the problems involved with study of Chinese and should contribute insights to others who are teaching Chinese as a second language.

2. The Significance of Culture in Shaping Personality

There are numerous variables contributing to successful foreign language learning. Some of these are purely pedagogical, others are associated with culture learning (to be discussed in the subsequent sections) and with personality development. The latter, according to Brown (1980:100) has been regarded as "intrinsic side of affectivity" which contributes to the success of language learning. The "affective domain" which Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues (Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia 1964) provided can be extended to better define the significance of culture learning in relation to personality. According to Bloom and others (1964), the development of affectivity begins with receiving. Then a person goes beyond receiving to responding, committing himself in at least some small measure to a phenomenon or a person. In a certain dimension, the person is willing to respond voluntarily without coercion. The third level of affectivity involves valuing, placing worth on a thing, a behavior, or a person. Later the individual will organize values into a system of beliefs, determining interrelationships among them, and

establish a hierarchy of values within this system. Finally, he becomes characterized by and understands himself in terms of his value system.⁶

The fundamental notions of receiving, responding and valuing are universal (Brown 1980:102). It is my belief that these universal notions can be further clarified since there are individual differences in interacting with other people as well as differences in motivations for learning. Moreover, all learners are characterized by their desire for self-esteem, empathy, and instrumental and integrative motivation. Thus, culture learning and awareness of cultural difference can be instrumental to foreign language learning. And it has to be realized that the interaction between teacher and students is crucial. This is particularly true in a cross-cultural setting. Failure to appreciate this necessity of honoring each person's culture may have grave consequences.

By the same token, success in valuing a new system will enhance a student's learning of a new language. Indeed, it has been widely recognized that:

"Culture is a way of life. Culture is the context within which we exist, think, feel, and relate to others. It is the 'glue' that binds a group of people together" (Brown 1980:122).

Brown's comments can be extended to a larger scope in which different cultures merge. Those who come to a society different from their own and consciously attempt to adjust themselves both mentally and physically to their new environment will be more tolerant, appreciative, and eager to understand that society's system and values. Since these people are more receptive than others, they can gradually develop the sympathetic, amiable personality which is also best suited for language learning. Those students who are most successful in the Mandarin Training Center are those who are eager to become not only bilingual, but also interested in becoming bicultural. The seven universal points that George Peter Murdock (1961:45-54) cites can be used

to justify these cultural patterns of behavior: (1) they originate in the human mind (2) they facilitate human and environmental interactions; (3) they satisfy basic human needs; (4) they are cumulative and adjust to changes in external and internal conditions; (5) they tend to form a consistent structure; (6) they are learned and shared by all the members of a society; and (7) they are transmitted to new generations (Brown 1980:123).

Murdock's comments can further justify another fact that despite the cultural differences, there are similarities among all the cultures of this world. What we are most concerned with are those similarities with which all people comply. As recorded in Chinese philosophy, there are differences in the same entity, and likewise, there are similarities in the differences. Those who are aware of and practice this concept can usually be more friendly, cooperative, and eager to make friends with people from different cultural backgrounds. These people demonstrate empathy and sincerity. They interweave language with culture in their process of second language acquisition. Eventually they become accepted, well liked individuals not only in their peer group, but particularly to the teacher who plays a vital role in the whole teaching and learning process. This evidence is salient among the more than 800 students at the MTC who come from diversified cultural backgrounds. There are always desirable students, irrespective of sex and races, who the teachers and staff enjoy and eagerly offer more assistance. Likewise, there are those students who arrogantly demonstrate an aura of cultural and ethnic superiority for no reason. Teachers usually become reserved toward these students, and their motivation and dedication are inevitably reduced. The transmission of knowledge involves "give and take," and the task can only be achieved when teacher and students mutually respect each other. Optimal performance can be better guaranteed in a congenial, agreeable setting, and culture learning has a great impact on the attainment of this atmosphere.

Culture learning therefore, has much to do with the shaping of the more pleasing, agreeable, and understanding personality which is needed for the efficient learning of a foreign language.

3. Reconciliation of Cultural Differences for Learning Chinese as a Second Language

Among the universal characteristics of foreign language learning in an international setting is the need for affective domain from the side of the teacher, and culture plays even a more vital role in this respect. Some students are sensitive to a certain type of behavior from a teacher, while other students will have quite different expectations. In teaching one lesson with regard to culture to her students from various backgrounds, Miss Wang asked the students one question: "How would you react if your wife/husband were angry with you?"⁷ Here are the different feedbacks from various cultural representations:

Japanese female: "I'd apologize to him for whatever reason."

Canadian female: "I won't bother talking to him."

Japanese male: "I'll go out for a beer."

Indian male: "I'll go out for another woman."

It is common for American males or females, on the other hand, to seek for communication in order to reconcile differences. Failure to do may lead to divorce (Joan and Mike Mainhoff, personal communication).

For the traditional Chinese, however, there is an old saying, "You fight on one end of the bed, but reconcile on the other." Obviously, in a class of five students representing five different cultures, it will take considerable wisdom on the teacher's part to deal with the considerable cultural differences characterized by the various replies in response to the aforementioned question.

Evidence has shown that Oriental students tend to be less outspoken, whereas Westerners are more aggressive and express more vocally what they

want from their studies. Disharmony will sometimes erupt in even a small class of five students. Oriental students (such as Japanese, Korean, Thai, etc.) often complain that Western students (such as American, British, German, French, Swiss, etc.) tend to dominate the class activities; Western students, meanwhile, are impatient with the slow progress and quietude demonstrated by Oriental students in general. Occasionally some of the more aggressive students, who are eager to progress more steadily, mobilize to eject this type of "slow" student. Although the Mandarin Center has imposed strict placement tests for all newcomers, it is inevitable that after one or two months of learning Chinese, differences in achievement will be marked. Even though it is the policy of the Center to allow students to switch their classes every month to meet individual needs, most of the students prefer to stay with their original teacher, or the one they most appreciate, instead of changing to a different class with its contingent readjustment risks.

This type of "minor conflict" generated through cultural differences need not necessarily be a negative aspect of learning. My experiences in working with international students these past four years has convinced me that this type of conflict is an indication of strong student motivation to make greater and quicker progress in learning Chinese. This attitude is reinforced by the fact that most students pay their own way to Taipei, travelling thousands of miles in order to upgrade their learning of Chinese (Rocovits 1953:15). They are dedicated to their learning of Chinese, aiming at making use of every possible single minute in order to achieve maximal progress in minimal duration of time.⁸ Under such circumstances, the teacher plays a vital role in paying individual attention to each student; this is complemented by the counselor as well as the administrative executive chief who is responsible in formulating an optimal policy for

both teacher training and student guidance. My experience in the MTC suggests that the following components be taken into serious consideration:

3.1 The Significance of Teacher Training

Due to sociocultural differences, it is evident that teaching English to Chinese students is strikingly different from teaching Chinese to foreigners, particularly Westerners. Many students from the western world are frustrated when learning Chinese in some institutions in Asia merely because often the teachers do not know how to teach, what to teach, or basic pedagogical strategies -- not to mention inadequate understanding of the students' cultural background as well as their needs. As mentioned earlier, it is the teacher that plays a vital role in making the learning of the Chinese language possible despite diversified cultural differences among the students. It is certainly not the case that whoever speaks Chinese can teach Chinese. Likewise, it is a truism that those who are native speakers of English do not necessarily teach better English than the ones who are foreigners but have been trained in this profession (Li 1984). When teaching Chinese as a second language to those from other cultural backgrounds, teachers must have special pedagogical training to ensure successful student learning.

The teacher should understand not only the basic knowledge of the subject he is teaching, but should also possess a profound knowledge of the culture manifesting the target language. Bonin (1952:33) has explicitly pointed out the significance of culture in language classes:

For many people, interest in a foreign language is very closely linked with interest in the way other people live and think, in how they perceive, relate to and shape their environment, in the values and beliefs that give meaning to their existence, in the institutions and customs that structure their daily lives... It is almost impossible to present a foreign language without reference to the culture that forms its natural context and gives it much of its meaning.

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In addition to equipping language teachers with an abundant amount of knowledge and interest in culture, it is essential that efficient updated teaching strategies be transferred to the teachers through pre-service and in-service teacher training or workshops lest the teachers' knowledge about pedagogies stagnate. During this era of rapidly expanding knowledge new dimensions of language teaching are constantly being explored. Failure to grasp new ideas and techniques for efficient language teaching will only end up with students' complaints and waste of time and energy.

To ensure efficient teaching of Chinese as a second language to students from more than forty countries, the Mandarin Training Center sponsors workshops and seminars aiming to improve teachers' awareness of ways to teach specific groups of students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. A weekly seminar promotes efficient teaching of culture in the language class. In this program, scholars from different disciplines are invited to give lectures on a broad range of topics, including Chinese language teaching strategy, sociolinguistics, Chinese syntax, Chinese etymology, and Chinese phonetics. Furthermore, there are guest lectures covering administration techniques and personal experiences in teaching Chinese as a second language. Participants in the seminar are required to write research papers focusing on Chinese language teaching, including strategies on Chinese culture learning for foreign students.

Participating teachers have undertaken research focusing, for instance, on contrastive analysis, error analysis in syntactic and phonetic components, on teaching Chinese in specific settings or for specific goals, etc.⁹ Above all, this in-service training program provides pragmatic methods for implementing different concepts of

successful foreign language teaching and learning, including how to handle cultural shock and cultural conflict problems.

3.2 Material Adaptation and Development

When dealing with students from diversified cultural backgrounds, administrators and teachers should understand that not all foreign students will appreciate the same set of teaching materials. In the Mandarin Training Center, for instance, most of the Japanese and other Asian students in beginning classes enjoy textbooks used in the local elementary schools. This is not the case for those from the Western world, for they prefer specially adapted beginning Chinese readers over those considered to be "kid stuff".

It is a universal phenomenon that students manifest individual differences in their learning strategies and preferences. Thus, in addition to the general teaching strategies acquired through such training procedures as indicated in Section 3.1, it is necessary that teachers be able to adapt or design basic reading materials to meet individual needs in their classes. Since most of the students taking Chinese as a second language are potentially or actually enthusiastic about Chinese culture, the teachers can not afford to omit adding teaching materials to their classes that manifest Chinese culture. Failure to do so will only make the class boring and unappreciated by students.

In this regard, Bonin (1982:37) was certainly correct when he proposed in JCLTA:

How then can culture be a presence that permeates the atmosphere of the classroom, yet does not invade it? I believe it is the shared responsibility of the instructor and the teaching materials or textbooks. Culture should

be imbedded into almost every component of the teaching materials, but only the teacher can bring it to life. And only the teacher can guide the students -- and involve them actively -- in the various steps necessary to reach a genuine understanding of the foreign culture: an active quest for information; an in-depth understanding of cultural phenomena; a personal reflection on the meaning of these similarities and differences; an assessment of their personal values and life style and an awareness of the options that this new knowledge and understanding has opened up for them.

This does not mean that a language teacher (of Chinese) should be an almighty individual, but it suggests that all teachers involved in teaching Chinese as a second language be able to tackle the problems presented in the multi-cultural setting. I would emphasize again that methods of teaching Chinese to foreigners are very different from teaching English to our own Chinese students.

3.3 Empathy for Students

Efficient communication is one important variable in fostering successful language teaching. International students who travel from afar to a different cultural setting to learn a new language can be easily frustrated. Homesickness and loneliness as well as adjustment problems prevail and often erode students' morale. Consecutive undesirable performances in class due to adjustment problems will cause further psychological withdrawal. It is therefore essential that teachers and administrators extend empathy to these students in order to buoy them up when necessary. Empathy serves as a "catalyst" to promote better inter-personal communication. Thus, Guiora (1972:142) defined empathy as "a process of comprehending in which a temporary fusion of self-object boundaries permits an immediate emotional apprehension of the affective experience of another."¹⁰

In a second language learning situation such as the Mandarin Training Center, the problem of empathy becomes acute; its absence

will create not only inefficient Chinese language learning, but also interpersonal discord. Hogan (1969) asserts that empathy is an awareness and knowledge of one's own feelings, as well as identification with another person. Therefore, in order to ensure a harmonious atmosphere in the Mandarin Training Center and render it an optimal location for learning Chinese and Chinese culture, we have been working to maintain student morale by amplifying the empathy of teachers and staff while still maintaining high educational standards. The results of our concerns and training have been excellent. Our students maintain high motivation for learning, with all four linguistic skills equally emphasized,¹¹ due in part to our sensitivity to the empathy issue.

Appropriate and timely empathy with student needs enables them to generate personal motivation for better learning skills and ensures greater achievement by enhancing desirable internalization of language learning. Students are easily discouraged, regardless of ethnic group, sex, or age. Realization of proper teacher-student empathy can enable students to build up better confidence in learning and reinforce their instrumental and integrative motivation for foreign language learning.

3.4 Student Orientation and Counseling

Orientation and counseling programs for students is an essential ingredient in reconciling cultural differences. In the U.S.A., there are International Student Offices administering foreign students' affairs by offering a broad range of assistance. This should be implemented as well in Chinese language training programs for foreign students. As a matter of fact, the Mandarin Training Center started its own orientation programs only from March, 1962. Prior to that time, there were numerous instances of conflict between students and the staff, and complaints were a frequent

experience. Nearly all of these could be accounted for in terms of a gap in communication.

Ever since the monthly orientation was implemented in 1982, relations between students, teachers, and administrators has become much more congenial, and most unnecessary disputes and complaints have gradually disappeared. Students have been more clearly aware of the services to which they are entitled, and the Center has gradually provided even more conveniences. It is everybody's responsibility to know the rules of the game, and many cases of cultural shock and cultural conflicts have been thus eliminated due to more thorough and efficient communication.

It is through the orientation program that students from overseas first become aware of the empathy extended to them by both teachers and administrators. The students' learning of Chinese has been reinforced as a result, and the more they learn, the happier they become. The process of cross-cultural learning together with the acquisition of this "exotic language"¹² has become a pleasing and enlightening experience instead of a nightmare such as what caused Clifford Adelman (1978) to feel "My bones crack with transition" in learning this formidable language.

4. Conflicts Derived from Cultural Differences

In the acquisition of foreign languages as such Chinese in a genuine setting, e.g., in Taipei, conflicts are often inevitable. It takes wisdom and knowledge, nevertheless, to tackle the conflicts, to solve any possible problems, and to ensure desirable Chinese language learning for students from all over the world.

In spite of a number of well planned precautions with regard to possible cultural conflicts (see Sections 3.3 and 3.4), there are still occasional conflicts occurring even in the class of the best teacher.¹³ Some striking cases are as follows:

4.1 Max Rech's Request for Make-up Classes

Max Rech was a German Swiss interested in Chinese culture and language study. This motivated him to sell his business and come to Taipei for our Chinese program. During the third month after his arrival, he was recruited to appear in a film depicting the Boxer Uprising (1900) in China. Due to his appearance and background, he was cast as the German ambassador to China. Not willing to give up his time for Chinese lessons, Max asked his teacher if she would like to make up the classes he was going to miss during the one week movie shooting period. The teacher, having a typical Chinese personality, found it almost impossible to decline. After several inquiries she reluctantly complied to his request.

When the filming was over, Max came back for the classes he missed, taking it for granted that his teacher would make up classes at his whim. Being ego-centric, Max asked that the the classes be made up during the lunch break which caused the teacher considerable inconvenience. Slight impatience and tardiness on the teacher's part were indications of her displeasure. Serious conflicts developed between the teacher and Max, and he wrote a letter to me protesting his teacher's breaking her own promise, which he thought to be an unusual deviation from the traditional Chinese code of ethics.

After personally clarifying the issues involved to Max in my office, he quickly appreciated the difficulties Chinese have saying "No" to students. "If I were your teacher," I told Max bluntly, "I would take it for granted that you gave up your classes in order to make money off campus by appearing in the movies." Indeed, the teacher was entitled the right not to make up the missed classes. Her problem, being a traditional Chinese, was finding it impossible to decline.

Max continued studying Chinese in the Center for another year. He never voiced any further complaints, attained fluency in speaking, and achieved excellent writing and reading skills. He became one of many cases that survived cultural conflicts.

4.2 Susan Taylor's Bout with Homesickness

One day, long after the fourth morning period was over, my secretary told me that Mrs. Chu, one of the model teachers of the Center, was sobbing bitterly in the classroom. Shocked, I rushed to her classroom to see what was happening. She was having an severe incident of cultural conflict with Susan Taylor, a black student from New York City.

On inquiring into the problem, Susan told me that she had been humiliated by Mrs. Chu's requests for extra drill. In most cases, students would have been appreciative of additional individual attention, not to mention the free extra hours of outside class help.

After a lengthy conversation with me, Susan burst into tears saying, "Don't you folks know what time of year it is? I'm homesick!" I suddenly realized that Christmas was near at hand, but there was no way for Susan to return. Torn by family problems, Susan was in a terrible mood. At this juncture, it was almost impossible for her to concentrate on her studies. Her emotions were ready to explode at any time. In spite of this crisis, empathy helped. The once disoriented Susan began to smile amid her tears, and she was able to return to class happily the next day.

A better understanding of cultural differences can solve many human problems, and coupled with empathy, the approach can be even more efficient. What a language teacher, particularly a Chinese language teacher, should possess is not only pedagogical strategies, but more importantly, the ability to overcome culture differences through empathy.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Teaching is an art. This is particularly true in teaching foreign languages. In The Art of Teaching, Gilbert Highet (1950:7) concluded convincingly that "We should try to find out, not what should be taught, but how the teaching can best be done." In this point Highet was only partially right. For in addition to knowing how the teaching can best be done, there should be another dimension: empathy and a clear perception of the cross-cultural learning/teaching experience. As more and more individuals and institutions are becoming interested in learning Chinese as a second language (Li 1982; Ning 1983), we can not afford to miss this dimension lest our effort for promoting the teaching of Chinese as a second language be futile.

As interpersonal distances of the world narrow down, it is mandatory that we possess the consensus that communication is what the world needs. The teaching of any language aims at successful and efficient communication in any format, verbal or non-verbal, in order to arrive at harmonious, peaceful global relations. Private individuals and public academic institutions have consistently invested great sums of money in language teaching. The Chinese language, regarded as one of the most difficult to learn, can be efficiently taught if and only if we know how to go about it. It is justifiable to claim that Chinese language teachers should possess special qualities, including dynamic pedagogical strategies, capabilities for adapting teaching materials which are culturally and communicatively oriented, and skills in demonstrating sufficient empathy to provide a totally agreeable and pleasant learning environment. Students are always students: they need to feel their teachers are concerned with their progress. They need encouragement even though they may be professors, attorneys, or successful business executives. Their motivation needs constant development and their morale has to be maintained. In the international setting in which cultural shocks and cultural conflicts frequently occur, it is the teacher who can convert liabilities into assets. My

experiences in directing the Mandarin Training Center have convinced me of this fact, and I am happy to share with you my personal discoveries, many of which have been corroborated by distinguished scholars in the field of language teaching. Language teaching is challenging and rewarding, and teaching Chinese as a second language can be done especially well if we know how to perform the job properly.

NOTES

¹All personal names in this paper have been changed to ensure the privacy of the individuals involved; nevertheless, all incidents are true as reported.

²The East-West Center is a national educational institution established in Hawaii by the U.S. Congress in 1960 to promote better relations and understanding between the United States and the nations of Asia and the Pacific through cooperative study, training, and research.

³The Mandarin Training Center (MTC) is a non-profit making institution affiliated with National Taiwan Normal University, Taipei, Taiwan. Ever since its establishment in 1956, it has grown rapidly from 12 students in 1956 to 810 students in November 1984. Students come from every continent to study at the Center, which has always been characterized by small class sizes: the individual tutorial class, the two-student class, and the 3-5 student class (its largest). There are currently 12,900 alumni of the Center in 82 countries.

⁴According to Li (1982) there are more and more U.S. educational institutions enthusiastic about the implementation of Chinese language teaching programs. Cynthia Ning's (1993) "Resources for Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language: A Survey of American College & Universities" lists 496 institutions in the U.S. offering Chinese language teaching programs.

⁵The students who pursue Mandarin Chinese studies at the Center come from diversified cultural and ethnic backgrounds. They include graduate and undergraduate students, professors, area scholars, attorneys, and business executives. There are students at the Center from top universities of countries around the world.

⁶See also Brown (1983:101-102)

⁷This is a report written by Ms. Wang Shu-mei, one of the teachers in the Mandarin Training Center who is currently participating in the Mandarin Teachers In-service Training Program administered by the Center. Her writing is a partial fulfillment of the program's requirements.

⁸Upon the completion of their program, they leave for their home countries. Some continue studies in graduate schools, while others join professional

careers such as the foreign service, international law and business, and teaching.

⁹All these can be accomplished based on the needs of their students. Some of the teachers did research on topics in relation to teaching Chinese as a second language from a perspective of sociolinguistics.

¹⁰See also Brown (1990:106).

¹¹It is mandatory that all the students enrolled in the Mandarin Training Center learn the four linguistic skills of Chinese, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Beginners without any previous background in Chinese can learn to communicate with Chinese after four months of study. Eleven months of serious study will enable students to speak Mandarin quite fluently. For professional goals in reading and writing, it will take about two years.

¹²The US Foreign Service Institute (FSI) lists Chinese (together with Arabic and Russian) as an exotic language.

¹³All teachers have to be university or college graduates, and must demonstrate excellent Mandarin Chinese pronunciation, plus be interested in cross-cultural programs. Those who are over fifty years old were born in Peking and speak standard Peking Mandarin. The younger generation of Mandarin Training Center teachers have to pass a series of competitive examinations in both language courses and teaching strategies to prove their qualifications for teaching. Teaching workshops supplement their already considerable skills.